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Checklist of Birds From the Playa Lakes of the Southern Texas Panhandle

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Playa lakes support the only native vegetation remaining throughout much of the Texas Panhandle. Originally, this region was a shortgrass prairie dominated by buffalograss (*Buchloe dactyloides*), blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*) and a variety of prairie forbs (Shelford 1963). Now the prairie vegetation is gone, replaced by one of the most intensively cultivated regimes of croplands in North America (Bolen et al. 1979). The vegetation and aquatic environments of playa lakes therefore seem of special value to the migrant and resident (summer and/or winter) avifauna. With adequate precipitation, water fills the basins and dots the landscape with a mosaic of lakes (Fig. 1). In this study, we document avian use of, or association with, playa lakes in three counties (Parmer, Castro, and Swisher) whose ornithology is poorly known (Fig. 2). Waterfowl records are omitted as they have been reported elsewhere (Moore 1980).

There are few early reports of flora or fauna associated with playa lakes. Reed (1930) described the vegetation and Rowell (1971) later published a checklist of the vascular plants, but the flora varies greatly between and among lakes in the same vicinity. For example, any one or more of 7 species of smartweed (*Polygonum* spp.) may be present whereas some lakes have none at all. Emergent vegetation, if present, may be dominated by cattail (*Typha domingensis*) or bulrush (*Scirpus* spp.). Submersed vegetation often is absent or sparse but includes pondweeds (*Potamogeton* spp.) and naiad (*Najas quadualupensis*). Barnyard grass (*Echinochloa crusgalli*) is among the more common grasses thriving in playa basins.

McCauley (1877) surveyed the birds "about the source of the Red River of Texas." Much later, Stevenson (1942) published a checklist of birds he recorded in the central Panhandle, but there has been no systematic list prepared for birds associated with playa lakes in this region of Texas.

Playa environments have been modified, often severely, for agricultural purposes. Important changes in their ecology result from the excavation of deep-sided pits as a means of collecting and storing runoff for irrigation. In general, this greatly diminishes the area of aquatic habitat and limits much of the littoral zones crucial for biological productivity and the maintenance of many food webs. On the other hand, the pits provide some amount of surface water in dry years and thus may function, in part, as refugia for water-dependent organisms. Playas also are sites of epizootics of fowl cholera and botulism that in some years claim thousands of waterfowl and other birds (Moore and Simpson 1981; Taylor and Pence 1981). These and other relationships concerning playa ecology and management were discussed at length by Bolen et al. (1979), Simpson et al. (1981), Bolen (1982), and Bolen and Guthery (1982).

Fig. 1. Circular patterns of playa lakes dot the cultivated landscape of the Texas Panhandle in years of adequate rainfall. Photo courtesy of High Plains Underground Water Conservation District No. 1, Lubbock, Texas.

Methods

A total of 100 playa lakes was censused in Parmer (N = 30 lakes), Castro (N = 50), and Swisher counties (N = 20) between December 1979 and May 1981. Sixty-three censuses were conducted, 27 of these on "intensive" lakes and 36 on "non-intensive" lakes. On intensive lakes, 300-m line transects were walked through 19 lakes in Castro Co.; these generally were censused biweekly. On non-intensive lakes, 20 to 30 lakes were visited for 4 min each and all birds seen or heard were recorded. Intensive censuses often revealed the presence of secretive species (e.g., Marsh Wrens, *Cistothorus palustris*) otherwise undetected on non-intensive surveys. The results have been combined in the following checklist:

Table 1. Annotated checklist of species.[1]

Eared Grebe* (*Podiceps nigricollis*). U. Spring, fall migrant and summer resident. 10 May–26 Aug. *C, S.*

Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*). R. One spring record on 13 May 1980. *C.*

Pied-billed Grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*). R. Fall migrant observed on 22 Jul, 26, 29 Aug, 21 Sep 1980. *C. S.*

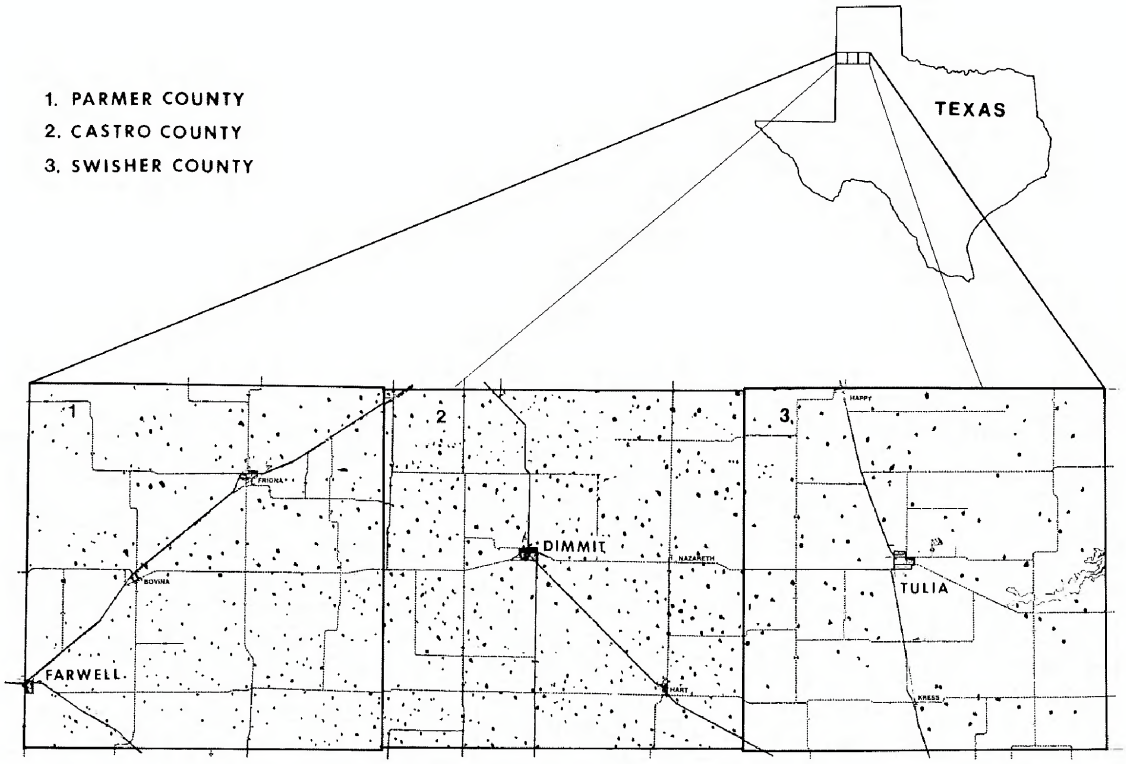

Fig. 2. Location of Parmer, Castro and Swisher counties on the Southern High Plains of the Texas Panhandle. Playa lake locations (dots) are based on maps from the Texas Department of Highways and Public Transportation but more lake basins likely exist in each county than are actually shown.

Table 1. Continued.

Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritas*). R. Fall migrant seen once on 5 Sep 1980. *C.*
Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*). U. Spring, fall migrant and winter resident. 6 Aug–16 May. *P, C, S.*
Great Egret (*Casmerodius albus*). R. Fall migrant seen once on 16 Aug 1980. *C.*
Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*). R. Observed on 23 May and 5 Jun 1980. *C.*
Little Blue Heron (*Egretta caerulea*). R. Spring migrant seen on 4 May 1981. *C.*
Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*). R. Spring and fall migrant observed on 10, 23 May and 5 Sep 1980. *C.*
Black-crowned Night Heron* (*Nycticorax nycticorax*). A. Resident. At least one breeding colony was present in Castro Co. P, C, S.
Yellow-crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax violaceus*). R. Observed on 17 Jul, 30 Jul, and 5 Sep 1980. *C.*
White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*). U. Spring and fall migrant from 13–23 May, and 21 Jul–6 Aug. *C.*
Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*). R. Migrant observed on 5 Sep 1980. *C.*
Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*). R. Migrant observed on 5 Sep and 20 Oct 1980. *C.*
Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*). R. Winter resident recorded from 29 Oct–19 May. *C, S.*
Broad-winged Hawk (*Buteo platypterus*). R. Sighted on 5 Sep 1980. *C.*
Swainson's Hawk* (*Buteo swainsoni*). A. Spring, fall migrant and summer resident. 19 Apr–8 Oct. P, C, S.
Rough-legged Hawk (*Buteo lagopus*). U. Winter resident. 4 Oct–17 May. P, *C, S.*
Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*). U. Winter resident. Less common than the preceding species. 13 Sep–6 Apr. P, *C, S.*
Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*). R. Single sighting on 1 Mar 1980. *C.*
Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*). A. Spring, fall migrant and winter resident. 23 Aug–22 Mar. P, C, S.
Prairie Falcon (*Falco mexicanus*). R. One observed on 5 Sep 1980. *C.*
Merlin (*Falco columbarius*). R. Single observation on 19 Apr 1980. P.
American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*). U. Spring, fall migrant and winter resident. 5 Sep–4 Apr. P, C, *S.*

Table 1. Continued.

Bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*). R. Resident. C.
Scaled Quail (*Callipepla squamata*). R. Single observation on 30 Jun 1980. *S.*
Ring-necked Pheasant* (*Phasianus colchicus*). A. Resident. P, C, S.
Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*). U. Winter resident. 6 Nov–6 Apr. P, C, S.
Sora (*Porzana carolina*). R. Spring and fall migrant observed on 10 May and 30 July 1980. *C.*
Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*). R. Observed on 30 Aug and 5 Sep 1980. *C.*
American Coot* (*Fulica americana*). C. Spring, fall migrant and summer resident from 19 Apr–13 Sep. *P,* C, S.
Semipalmated Plover (*Charadrius semipalmatus*). R. Migrant. Four birds were observed on 6 Aug 1980. *C.*
Killdeer* (*Charadrius vociferus*). U–A. Abundant resident spring through fall, uncommon winter resident. P, C, S.
Black-bellied Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*). R. Single birds were observed on 28 Oct 1980 and 14 May 1981. *C.*
Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*). R. Spring and fall migrant observed on 1 Mar, 11 Apr, and 29 Aug. *C.*
Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus*). R–C. Rare summer resident; common fall migrant. 14 May–8 Oct. P, *C, S.*
Upland Sandpiper (*Bartramia longicauda*). C. Spring and fall migrant. 3–17 May, 6 Jul–9 Sep. *P, C, S.*
Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*). U. Spring and fall migrant. 3 May–5 Jun, 3 Jul–8 Oct. *P, C, S.*
Solitary Sandpiper (*Tringa solitaria*). R. Migrant observed on 5, 12 Sep, and 10 Oct 1980. *C.*
Greater Yellowlegs (*Tringa melanoleuca*). C. Spring and fall migrant. 17 Mar–10 May, 1 Jul–19 Oct. *P, C, S.*
Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*). A. Spring and fall migrant. 19 Apr–10 May, 22 Jun–4 Oct. *P,* C, *S.*
Willet (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*). R. Observed from 12–26 Apr, and 1–23 Aug. C.
Pectoral Sandpiper (*Calidris melanotos*). R. Migrant observed from 24 Jul–6 Aug. *C.*
Baird's Sandpiper (*Calidris bairdii*). R–C. Rarely sighted in the spring (one record: 23 May 1980), but common in the fall from 17 Jul–20 Sep. P, *C, S.*
Least Sandpiper (*Calidris minutilla*). U–A. Uncommon spring and abundant fall migrant. 26 Apr–10 May, 29 Jun–8 Oct. P, *C, S.*
Western Sandpiper (*Calidris mauri*). U–C. Uncommon spring and common fall migrant. 10–13 May, 24 Jul–13 Sep. *C.*
Sanderling (*Calidris alba*). R. Fall migrant observed on 7 Aug and 5 Sep 1980. *C.*
Long-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*). A. Spring and fall migrant. 14 Mar–17 May, 17 Jul–29 Oct. P, *C, S.*
Stilt Sandpiper (*Calidris himantopus*). R–U. Rare spring migrant observed on 23 May 1980; uncommon fall migrant recorded from 24 Jul–4 Oct. P, *C.*
Buff-breasted Sandpiper (*Tryngites subruficollis*). R. One fall record on 5 Sep 1980. *C.*
Marbled Godwit (*Limosa fedoa*). R. Three were seen on 3 Sep 1980. *C.*
American Avocet* (*Recurvirostra americana*). A. Spring, fall migrant and summer resident. 14 Mar–29 Oct. P, C, S.
Black-necked Stilt* (*Himantopus mexicanus*). U. Spring, fall migrant and summer resident. 3 May–16 Aug. P, *C, S.*
Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*). R. Fall migrant recorded from 5 Sep–21 Nov 1980. *C.*
Wilson's Phalarope (*Phalaropus tricolor*). A. Spring and fall migrant. 19 Apr–17 May, 16 Aug–21 Sep. *P,* C, *S.*
Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*). R. Winter resident observed from 29 Oct–2 Mar. P, *C.*
Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*). U. Winter resident observed from 4 Oct–8 Mar. P.
Forster's Tern (*Sterna forsteri*). U. Spring and fall migrant recorded from 10 May–10 Jun, and 6–23 Aug. *P, C.*
Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*). C. Spring and fall migrant. 10 May–10 June, 2 Jul–23 Aug. P, C, *S.*
Rock Dove* (*Columba livia*). R. Resident. P, C, S.
Mourning Dove* (*Zenaida macroura*). R–A. One record from mid-winter (7 Feb 1980), otherwise abundant from 13 Mar–4 Oct. P, C, S.
Yellow-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*). R. Spring and fall migrant observed twice: 22 Jun and 6 Aug 1980. *C.*
Common Barn Owl* (*Tyto alba*). U–C. An uncommon summer resident; common winter resident. *C.*

Table 1. Continued.

Burrowing Owl* (*Athene cunicularia*). C. Spring, fall migrant and summer resident. 3 May–21 Sep. C, S.
Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*). C. Winter resident recorded from 6 Nov–21 Mar. *C.*
Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*). U. Spring records from 5–10 Jun. P, C, S.
Common Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*). R. Winter resident observed 8 Oct–15 Mar. *C.*
Western Kingbird* (*Tyrannus verticalis*). C. Spring, fall migrant and summer resident. 3 May–13 Sep. P, C, S.
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficata*). R. Migrant seen from 30 Jul–23 Aug. *C.*
Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis Saya*). R. Single observation on 6 Aug 1980. *C.*
Horned Lark* (*Eremophila alpestris*). A. Resident. P, C, S.
Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*). C–A. Common spring and abundant fall migrant. 10–17 May, 17 Jul–8 Oct. P, *C, S.*
Bank Swallow (*Riparia riparia*). U. Migrant observed from 17 Jul–30 Oct. P, *C, S.*
Northern Rough-winged Swallow (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*). U. Spring and fall migrant 10–13 May, 17 Jul–16 Aug. *C, S.*
Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*). A. Spring and fall migrant observed from 26 Apr–19 May, 30 Jun–11 Oct. P, C, S.
Cliff Swallow (*Hirundo pyrrhonota*). A. Spring and fall migrant observed from 10–23 May and 2 Jul–5 Sep. P, *C,* S.
Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*). R. One bird seen on 20 Oct. 1980. *C.*
American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*). A. Winter resident observed from 6 Nov–9 Mar. *P, C, S.*
Marsh Wren (*Cistothorus palustris*). U. Winter resident. 4 Jan–29 Mar. *C.*
Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*). R. Spring migrant observed on 3, 10, 28 May 1980. P, C.
American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*). R. Winter resident observed on 24 Feb 1980. *C.*
Hermit Thrush (*Catharus guttatus*). R. A record on 10 May 1980. *C.*
Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*). R. Winter resident observed on 3 Feb and 29 Oct 1980. *C.*
Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus calendula*). R. Spring migrant observed on 17 May 1980. *S.*
Water Pipit (*Anthus spinoletta*). R. Winter resident present from 19 Oct–17 Mar. *C.*
Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*). U. Spring, fall migrant and winter resident. 16 Aug–19 May. P, *C, S.*
European Starling* (*Sturnus vulgaris*). C. Resident. P, C, S.
Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica petechia*). R. Migrant observed on 17 May 1980. *S.*
Yellow-rumped Warbler (*Dendroica coronata*). U. Spring, fall migrant and winter resident. 9 Sep–10 May. *S.*
Common Yellowthroat* (*Geothlypis trichas*). U. Summer resident. 1 Jun–28 Jul. *C.*
Wilson's Warbler (*Wilsonia pusilla*). R. Spring and fall migrant recorded on 23 May and 5 Sep 1980. *C.*
House Sparrow* (*Passer domesticus*). A. Resident. P, C, S.
Western Meadowlark* (*Sturnella neglecta*). A. Resident. P, C, S.
Yellow-headed Blackbird* (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*). A. Spring, fall migrant and summer resident. 19 Apr–13 Sep. P, C, S.
Red-winged Blackbird* (*Agelaius phoeniceus*). A. Resident. P, C, S.
Brewer's Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*). R. Recorded on 6 Nov 1980. *C.*
Great-tailed Grackle* (*Quiscalus mexicanus*). C. Spring, fall migrant and summer resident. 30 Mar–20 Sep. *P, C, S.*
Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*). C. Spring, fall migrant. 19 Apr–13 Sep. P, C, S.
Pyrrhuloxia (*Cardinalis sinuata*). R. A single observation on 4 Jan 1980. *C.*
Blue Grosbeak (*Guiraca caerulea*). R. Two records of singing males on 28 May and 24 Jun 1980. *C.*
American Goldfinch (*Carduelis tristis*). R. Single flock observed on 13 Sep 1980. *C.*
Rufous-sided Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*). R. One bird seen on 10 May 1980. *C.*
Lark Bunting (*Calamospiza melanocorys*). R–C. A rare winter resident but common spring and fall migrant. 24 Aug–16 May. P, C, S.
Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*). C. Spring, fall migrant and winter resident. 19 Oct–3 May. *P, C,* S.
Grasshopper Sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*). U–R. Uncommon spring and fall migrant, rare summer resident, 3 May–29 Oct. *P, C, S.*
Vesper Sparrow (*Pooecetes gramineus*). U. Spring and fall migrant. 3–13 May, 13 Sep–10 Oct. *C, S.*
Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*). R. Migrant observed on 10, 17, 21 May 1980. *C, S.*
Cassin's Sparrow* (*Aimophila cassinii*). U. Spring migrant and summer resident. 8 May–17 Jul. P, *C.*
Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*). R. Spring migrant observed on 11 Mar 1980. *C.*

Table 1. Continued.

Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*). U. Spring migrant observed from 3–17 May. *S.*
Clay-colored Sparrow (*Spizella pallida*). U. Spring migrant observed from 3–17 May. *C, S.*
Brewer's Sparrow (*Spizella breweri*). R. Observed on 10 May 1980. *C.*
White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*). A. Spring, fall migrant and winter resident. 29 Oct–4 Apr. P, *C,* S.
Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*). R. Spring and fall migrant observed on 3 May and 20 Oct 1980. *C.*
McCown's Longspur (*Calcarius mccownii*). U. Winter resident 9 Feb–9 Mar. C, *S.*
Chestnut-collared Longspur (*Calcarius ornatus*). C. Winter resident. 26 Jan–11 Mar. P, *C, S.*

[1] Symbols:
* Indicates a breeding record. Either a nest was found or a brood observed.
Status: Immediately following scientific name.
A—Abundant. Many may be found on any day.
C—Common. A few may be found on any day.
U—Uncommon. Present, but not found daily.
R—Rare. Only a few records a year.
Dates of occurrence: Represent the extreme dates on which the species was observed.
County records: These follow the dates of occurrence.
P—Parmer Co.
C—Castro Co.
S—Swisher Co.
Italic counties indicate new county records not recorded by Oberholser (1974).

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Documentation of the Red-faced Warbler (*Cardellina rubrifrons*) in Texas and Review of its Status in Texas and Adjacent Areas

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Peterson (1960) listed the Red-faced Warbler (*Cardellina rubrifrons*) as hypothetical for Texas based on two sight records. More recently, Oberholser (1974) added three additional sight records and TOS (1974) retained the species as hypothetical, briefly summarizing prior records. The present article describes the first two documented Texas records and reviews the status of the species in the state and nearby areas of New Mexico and adjacent Mexico.

First Documented Records

On 2 June 1974, Bartol observed a Red-faced Warbler for 10 minutes at a distance of 15 m, foraging in trees at Boot Springs in the Chisos Mountains of Big Bend National Park (BBNP). The bird was photographed with a 35-mm camera and 300-mm telephoto lens. The color photos obtained allowed for positive identification of the warbler, as confirmed by Easterla and Dr. Charles A. Ely. A color print of the bird, originally deposited at the Northwest Missouri State University Vertebrate Collection, has been transferred to the Texas Photo Record File (No. 294) and constitutes the first documentation of the species in Texas.

On 10 August 1982, Lasley observed another Red-faced Warbler in Boot Canyon (BBNP). The bird was initially observed from 1440–1445 CDT and from 1530–1547 CDT. Lasley briefly observed the bird again on 11 August 1982 and at least 5 other observers are known to have seen the warbler in the same location (presumably the same bird) from 12 August through 16 August 1982 (BBNP files). The bird appeared to be in fresh unworn plumage. On 10–11 August, it was actively foraging in gray oak (*Quercus grisea*), canyon maple (*Acer grandidentatum*), and Mexican pinyon (*Pinus cembroides*). The bird was not associating with the numerous Colima Warblers (*Vermivora crissalis*) that were in the area and seemed to keep to itself for the most part. Detailed field notes were taken by Lasley on 10 August and numerous 35-mm color slides of the bird were taken with a 400-mm lens. Copies of Lasley's notes along with seven color slides were submitted to the Texas Photo Record File (Nos. 294A–G). Prior to the discovery of the Bartol's photo, this was initially thought to be the first documentation of the species in Texas. These slides now represent the second documented record.

Review of Reported Sightings

We have located 15 acceptable records of the Red-faced Warbler in Texas. Table 1 summarizes these records in chronological order. Figure 1 shows the geographical distribution of the records. Oberholser (1974) reviewed the 5 known sight records prior to 1974. We have taken the records published by Oberholser (1974), Peterson (1960), and TOS (1974) at face value as representing valid sight records. We have not examined details of any of those records. We have examined written details and/or have communicated with original observers for all of the remaining records. Because of the distinctive plumage of the species in all post-juvenile ages and sexes, we believe a knowledgeable, experienced observer would recognize the species with even a relatively brief glimpse under good viewing conditions. Further, we believe a novice observer would be able to correctly identify the species if seen under good conditions at close range for a sufficient time to study it and compare it to field guides (e.g., several minutes or more). In addition to the specific details we obtained for each of these sightings, the above criteria were met in all cases. We have tentatively rejected 2 other reports of the species: (1) one record for the Chisos Basin on 5 June 1974 (3 days after Bartol's record) in the files of BBNP has no details and we were unable to locate the observer; and (2) a record near Del Rio in May 1982 was reported to us third-hand with insufficient details and, again, we have been unable to contact the original observer.

Status of the Species in Texas and Adjacent Areas

The acceptable Texas records are distributed as follows: March (1 record), May (8), June (2), July (1), and August (3). Eight of these records are in the Trans-Pecos, and 7 elsewhere in Texas (Fig. 2). The Trans-Pecos records in May and June probably represent normal north-bound migrants. A small breeding population of the species exists in Karr Canyon of the Sacramento Mountains, Otero County, New Mexico, approximately 145 km northeast of El Paso, Texas (Hubbard 1978; McKenzie 1982; White 1982). Also, breeding of the Red-faced Warbler has recently been confirmed in the Sandia Mountains, New Mexico, approximately 385 km north of El Paso (Hubbard 1982). Birds wintering in southern Mexico (American Ornithologists' Union 1957) would logically pass through the Trans-Pecos area of Texas en route to these easternmost breeding locations.

The lone July record may represent a locally summering bird or an exceedingly early fall migrant. Young birds in Arizona and New Mexico may be out of the nest and undergoing post-juvenile molt as early as June (Bent 1963). Early fall migrants of other warblers breeding to the north and west (e.g., Townsend's Warbler, *Dendroica townsendi*), normally arrive in Big Bend in late July or early August (Wauer 1973).

The 3 August records may represent southbound fall migrants from the New Mexico populations or post-breeding dispersal from other populations. Even with the known breeding population to the north in New Mexico, we speculate that an undiscovered population of Red-faced Warblers in the nearby mountains of Coahuila or Chihuahua, Mexico, might be contributing post-breeding dispersers to the Big Bend region. Pine-fir-spruce forests similar to the breeding habitat of the Red-faced Warbler in Arizona, New Mexico and southwestern Chihuahua (Griscom and Sprunt 1981; Phillips et al. 1964; McKenzie 1982) occur in the

Table 1. Records of the Red-faced Warbler in Texas.

ID	Date	Location	Number of birds	Observer(s)	Source(s)
1.	5 May 1956	Midland, Midland County	1	Anne LeSassier	Peterson (1960), Oberholser (1974)
2.	1 Aug 1956	El Paso, El Paso County	4–8	Lena G. McBee, Mary Belle Keefer, Mr. and Mrs. D. T. Johnson, Caroline McClintock	Peterson (1960), Oberholser (1974), Wolfe et al. (1974)
3.	11 May 1962	Midland, Midland County	1	Frances Williams et al.	Wolfe et al. (1974), F. Williams (pers. comm.)
4.	5 Jun 1964	BBNP, Boot Canyon	1	B. A. Mack	Wauer and Ligon (1973), Oberholser (1974), Wolfe et al. (1974)
5.	30 May 1966	San Antonio, Bexar County	1	Col. and Mrs. E. R. Diggs, fide: Hazel Kush	Oberholser (1974)
6.	16 May 1968	Franklin Mountains, El Paso County	1	Luis Santaella, Sue Santaella	Luis Santaella, Geth White (pers. comm.)
7.	5 May 1973	Bend, San Saba County	3	Lillian Brown, Gerald Raun, Lou Barnette	Oberholser (1974)
8.	2 Jun 1974	BBNP, Boot Canyon	1	Dominic A. Bartol	(PRESENT PAPER)
9.	31 May 1975	Corpus Christi, Nueces County	1	Catherine McCarty	Kay McCracken, C. McCarty (pers. comm.)
10.	9 Jul 1978	BBNP, Boot Canyon	1	H. P. Langridge	American Birds, 32(6):1181, BBNP files
11.	22 Aug 1978	BBNP, Boot Canyon	1	Julius W. Dreckert	BBNP files
12.	12 May 1980	BBNP, Rio Grande Village	1	R. DeVine	BBNP files
13.	late Mar 1981	Padre Island, Nueces County	1	Dr. and Mrs. Paul Rockwell	Dr. and Mrs. Paul Rockwell, Kay McCracken (pers. comm.)
14.	11 May 1982	Buescher State Park, Bastrop County	1	Angela Strehli	Angela Strehli, Ed A. Kutac (pers. comm.)
15.	10–16 Aug 1982	BBNP, Boot Canyon	1	Greg Lasley, Gene Warren, Garry Spence, W. Watson et al.	(PRESENT PAPER)

Note: Identification numbers correspond to Fig. 1.

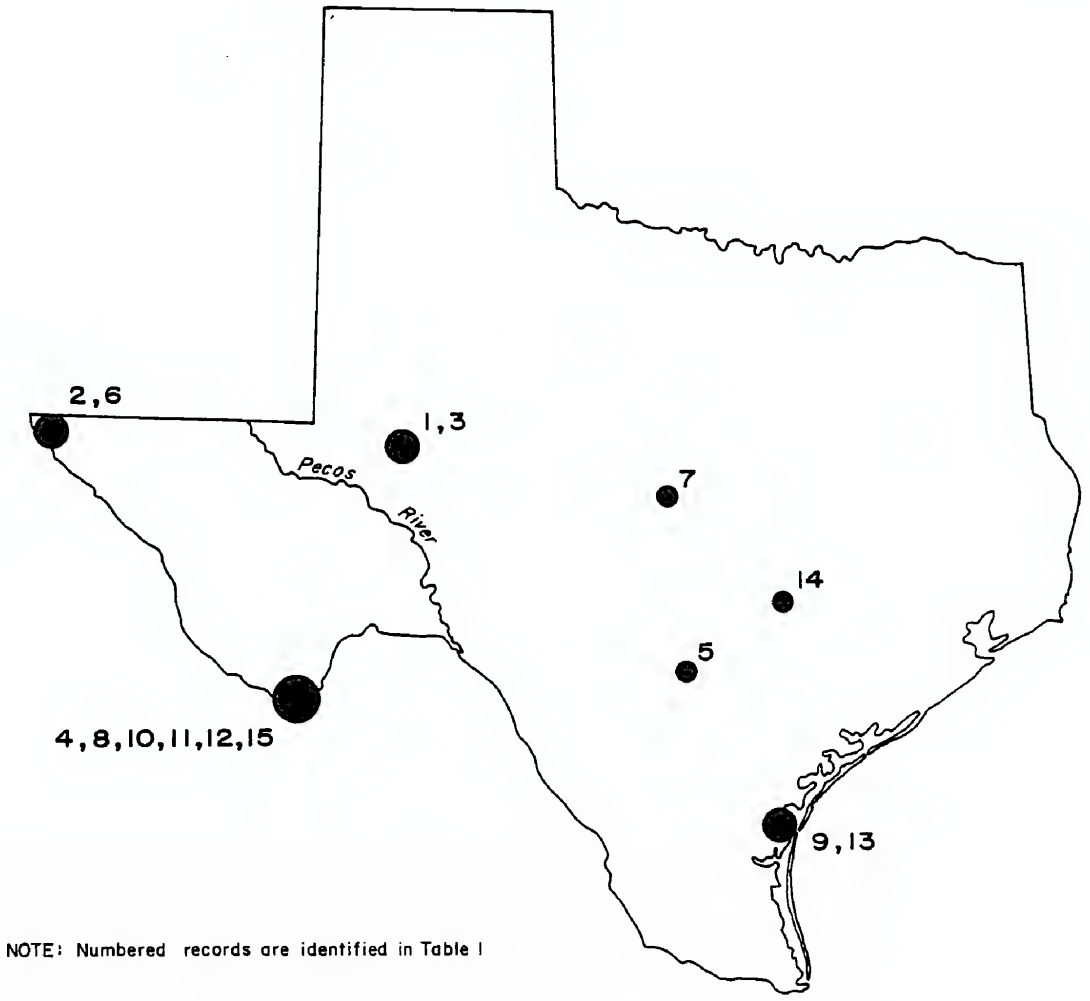

Fig. 1. Geographical distribution of Red-faced Warbler records.

Sierra del Carmen and elsewhere in Coahuila (Miller 1955; Urban 1959; Ely 1962). While the Red-faced Warbler has not been recorded in Coahuila (Urban 1959; Wauer and Ligon 1974), ornithological investigations in the higher montane habitats of the Sierra del Carmen in the summer months are limited to Marsh's work in 1936 (Marsh and Stevenson 1938) and Wauer's and Easterla's visits in the 1970's (Wauer and Ligon 1974; Wauer 1981). Heightening our speculation is the array of other rare species which characteristically show up in the Chisos Mountains in late summer. For example, during the first half of August 1982, records of rare migrants in Boot Canyon included a Northern Pygmy-Owl (*Glaucidium gnoma*) which may have arrived from a breeding population to the north, west, or south, and an Aztec Thrush (*Ridgwayia pinicola*) which breeds only to the southwest or south in Mexico (BBNP files; A.O.U. 1957; Friedmann et al. 1957; Wauer and Ligon 1974; Williams 1982). In July and August 1982, there were also 2 or 3 unconfirmed reports of a Hooded Grosbeak (*Coccothraustes* (*Hesperiphona*) *abeillei*) in the Chisos Mountains (BBNP files; Griffin 1982), another high elevation species known to breed as far north as eastern San Luis Potosi and southern Chihuahua (Peterson and Chalif 1973). There are several other rare late summer visitors from montane habitats which have been recorded in Big Bend

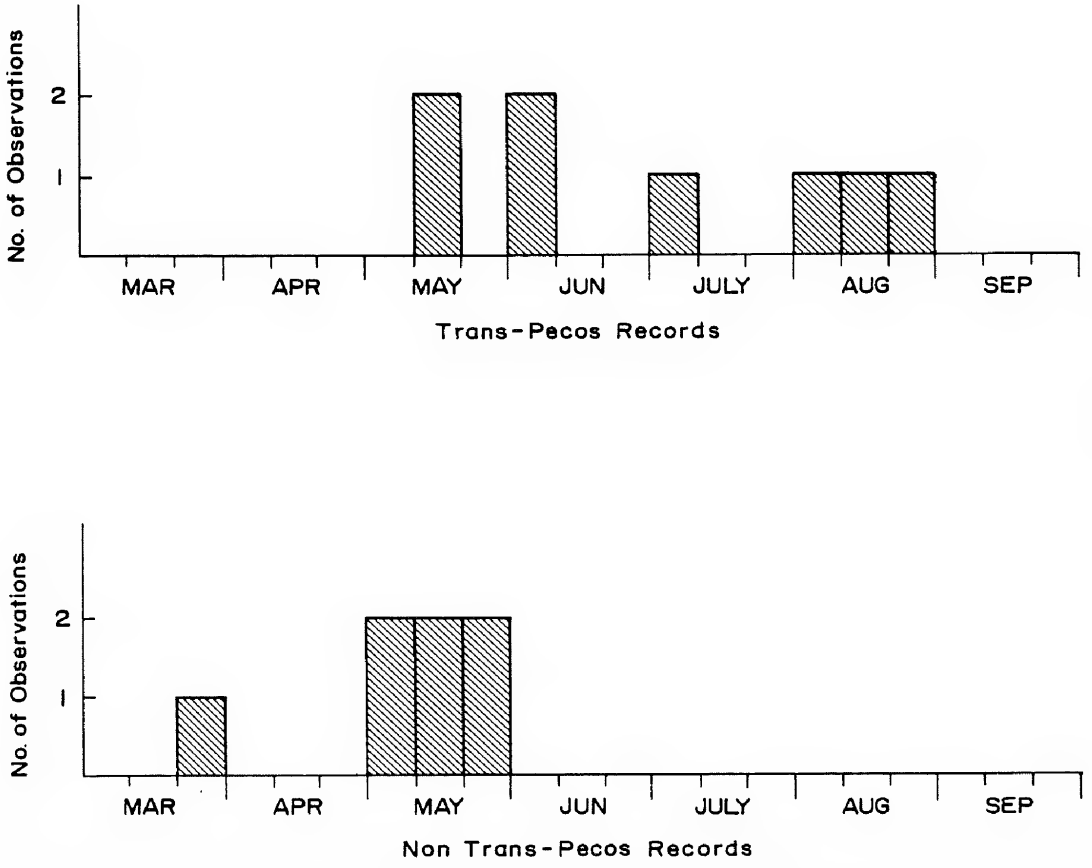

Fig. 2. Seasonal distribution of Red-faced Warbler sightings.

and for which we consider a Mexican origin (e.g., Sierra del Carmen) geographically most likely. These include the White-eared Hummingbird (*Hylocharis leucotis*), Greater Pewee (*Contopus pertinax*), Olive Warbler (*Peucedramus taeniatus*), and Yellow-eyed Junco (*Junco phaenotus*) among others (Friedmann et al. 1957; Wauer 1973; Wauer and Ligon 1974; Scott 1978; BBNP files). Wauer (1982) has noted that the concentration of Red-faced Warbler records in the Chisos Mountains may occur as this is one of the few areas of appropriate habitat for the species in Texas which is commonly visited by bird watchers.

The 7 records of the Red-faced Warbler away from the Trans-Pecos are likely to represent strays or overshoots of the spring migration. The late March record is remarkably early. By analogy to vagrant warblers elsewhere in North America (Austin 1971; Roberson 1980), springs strays would be more likely to appear late in the season such as in June, but the biological and climatological factors involved in producing such strays are undoubtedly complex. It should be noted that the 2 records of birds in Midland County are not far out of range for a Trans-Pecos migrant, and the species should be looked for elsewhere in lowland migrant traps in west Texas (cf. Hubbard 1978).

Summary

The Red-faced Warbler has been recorded at least 15 times in Texas and there are now 2 documented records. It occurs as an extremely rare but perhaps regular migrant in the Trans-Pecos in May–June and August where it has been recorded

in montane coniferous and mixed woodland, or in lowland migrant traps. It has also occurred as an accidental summer visitor in the mountains of Big Bend. There are at least 7 records of spring strays outside of the Trans-Pecos, primarily in May and in the southern half of the state. A breeding population of Red-faced Warblers occurs just north of the Trans-Pecos in New Mexico, and breeding of the species in the nearby but little-explored mountains of Mexico is possible.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the following people for reviewing records in their files: Anne Bellamy (BBNP), Kay McCracken (central Texas coast), and Frances Williams (west Texas). Geth White and Paul McKenzie provided valuable information on the New Mexico populations of Red-faced Warbler. Dr. Robert Dewers of Texas A&M University confirmed the identification of tree species utilized by the Red-faced Warbler. Early drafts of this article were reviewed by Jeff Goodson, Jerry Grubb, Rob Reid, Steve Runnels, Bruce Stewart, and Roland Wauer. The figures were drafted by France Davis. Clerical support was provided by Espey, Huston and Associates, Inc.

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GENERAL NOTES

Pileated Woodpecker Feeds on Horned Passalus Colony

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Pileated Woodpeckers (*Dryocopus pileatus*) often forage at the bases of tree stumps (Kilham 1976, Auk 93:15–24; McClelland 1979, *in* The role of insectivorous birds in forest ecosystems, Acad. Press). It is difficult to determine what Pileateds are feeding on unless there are obvious signs of carpenter ants (*Camponotus* spp.) or termites (Isoptera). As a result, there is a general lack of information on the identifications of wood-burrowing insect species eaten by Pileated Woodpeckers.

Hoyt (1941, Audubon Mag. 43:525–528; 1950, Bull. Mass. Aud. Soc. 34:99–103) mentioned that Pileateds fed on "wood-boring insects." Beal (1911, U.S.D.A., Biol. Survey Bull. 37) reported that beetles comprised 22 percent of 80 Pileated Woodpeckers' stomach samples. Cerambycidae, Buprestidae, and Elateridae were the only wood-boring insect families detected in the stomach samples.

On 27 February 1982 in Nacogdoches, Texas I observed a female Pileated Woodpecker foraging on a 24 cm high, 30 cm dbh red maple (*Acer rubrum*) stump that had been cut 2 years previously. The stump was moderately decayed with fungi fruiting on it. I observed the woodpecker with binoculars through one-way reflective glass at a distance of 5 m. The Pileated excavated into the stump between 1 and 10 cm above the ground in several locations penetrating 1 to 6 cm deep. Between 0700 and 0740 CST the female woodpecker extracted and ate 9 horned passalus or bessbug (*Popilius disjunctus* ILL., Passalidae, Coleoptera) larvae. The horned passalus larvae eaten were about 4.5 cm long and 1.0 cm in diameter. Colonies of these insects usually include an adult pair of beetles with many developing larvae (Baker 1972, Eastern forest insects, U.S.D.A., For. Serv. Misc. Pub. 1175). Parent beetles must reduce the wood to pulp and treat it with digestive secretions before the larvae can feed on it. I did not see the Pileated eat an adult beetle.

Since horned passalus larvae are large, colonial, and very common in eastern Texas, they may be an important food source for Pileated Woodpeckers year around. Land management that favors retention of hardwood stumps (at least 15

[1] Maintained in cooperation with the School of Forestry, Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas.

cm high) in the South would probably attract horned passalus beetles and benefit Pileated Woodpeckers.

I thank R. R. Fleet for constructive comments on the manuscript.

Food of Fledgling Olivaceous Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax olivaceus*) in East Central Texas

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Inland nesting colonies of Olivaceous Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax olivaceus*) are relatively rare. They have been reported from 9 counties (Telfair 1980, Bull. Texas Ornithol. Soc. 13:11–13). Anderson County adjoins Henderson County in east central Texas; but the other 7 counties are quite distant: Clay County in extreme north central Texas, Sabine County in extreme east Texas, Travis County in central Texas; and Brooks, Colorado, Victoria, and Zapata counties in south Texas. Food of adult and nestling Olivaceous Cormorants has been reported, but only for coastal colonies (Oberholser 1974, The bird life of Texas, Univ. Texas Press, Austin; Palmer 1962, Handbook of North American Birds, Yale Univ. Press, New Haven; and Morrison et al. 1977, Southwest Nat. 22:321–326).

Since 1976, Olivaceous Cormorants have nested at Cedar Creek Reservoir (NW Henderson Co.). In 1976, at least two pairs nested on "Bird Island 1," and by 1981, about 50 pairs nested on nearby "Bird Island 2." On 14 July 1981, we were banding and color-marking herons, egrets, and cormorants on these two islands. At about 1000, CDST, we approached 2 large, adjacent, dead Post Oaks (*Quercus stellata*) on "Bird Island 2" that contained 28 cormorant nests. The nestling cormorants (about 3/nest) regurgitated fish at our approach. We collected and photographed all 32 fishes that the nestlings regurgitated (Fig. 1).

The sample contained 1 Spotted Gar (*Lepisosteus oculatus*), 9 Gizzard Shad (*Dorosoma cepedianum*), 18 Carp (*Cyprinus carpio*), 1 Mosquito Fish (*Gambusia affinis*), 1 Spotted Sunfish (*Lepomis punctatus*), 1 Crappie, head only (*Pomoxis* sp.), and 1 Largemouth Bass (*Micropterus salmoides*). The carp, all but 1 shad, gar, sunfish, and bass were young-of-the-year (1981). The mosquito fish was an adult female. One shad and the crappie were yearlings (1980). Total lengths were: gar (12.8 cm), shad (15.7–17.1 cm), carp (8.1–10.0 cm), mosquito fish (4.3 cm), sunfish (6.2 cm), crappie (could not be measured), and bass (9.1 cm). All of these fishes could have been obtained by the cormorants in the same area—probably near shore in relatively shallow water from the littoral to pelagic zones.

On 15 June 1982, we returned to the island to band and color-mark birds and we collected regurgitated fish under the same oak trees. The sample contained 52 fishes: 3 Gizzard Shad, 23 Carp, 2 Green Sunfish (*L. cyanellus*), 11 Bluegill (*L.*

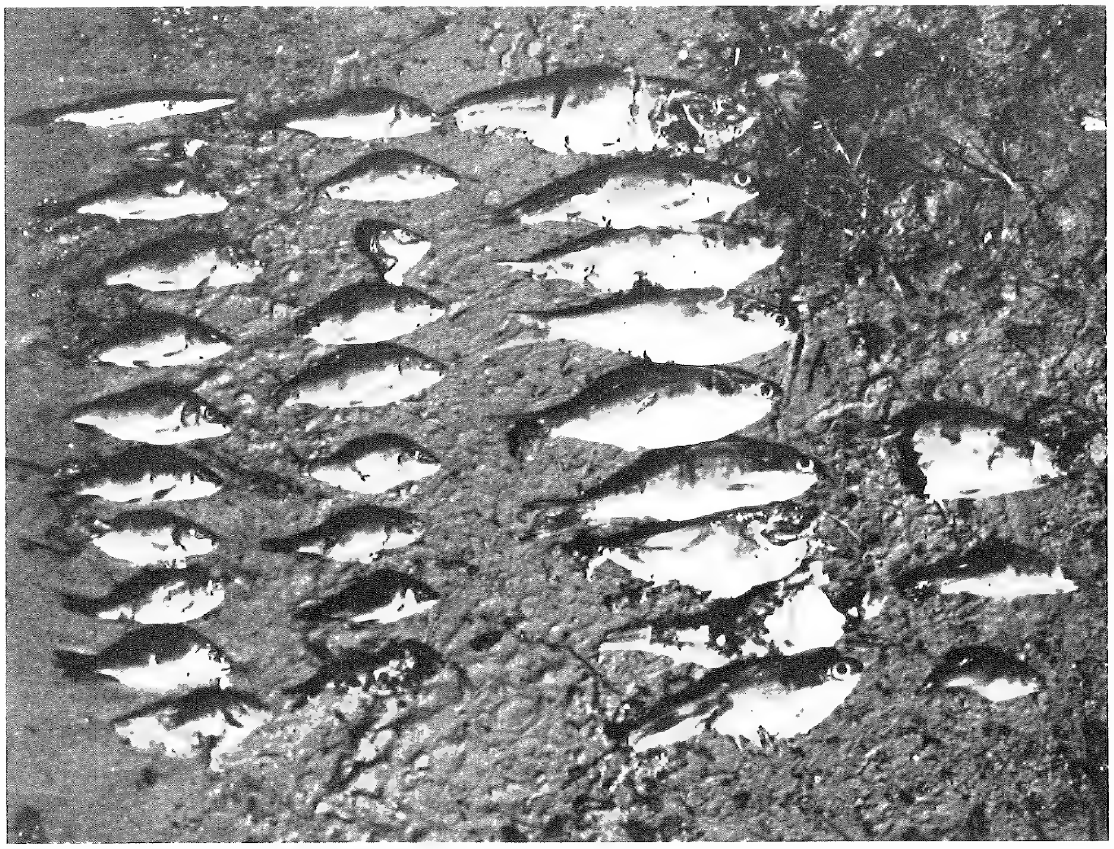

Fig. 1. Diet of fledgling Olivaceous Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax olivaceus*) at an inland reservoir in east central Texas: left column top to bottom, Spotted Gar (*Lepisosteus oculatus*), Mosquito Fish (*Gambusia affinis*), and Carp (*Cyprinus carpio*); second column from left, Carp; third column from left, Gizzard Shad (*Dorosoma cepedianum*); right column top to bottom, Crappie (*Pomoxis* sp.), Largemouth Bass (*Micropterus salmoides*), and Spotted Sunfish (*Lepomis punctatus*). Photographed by Ray C. Telfair II; printed by Bruce G. Davis.

macrochirus), 8 Longear Sunfish (*L. megalotis*), 1 Largemouth Bass, and 4 unidentified sunfishes. All shad were adults. Ten of the carp were yearlings; 13 were young-of-the-year (1982). The sunfishes and bass were yearlings or adults. Total lengths were: shad (17.8–20.3 cm), carp (2.5–17.8 cm), sunfishes (5.1–12.7 cm), and bass (15.2 cm). As in 1981, these fishes could have been obtained in relatively shallow littoral to pelagic waters.

According to Oberholser (op. cit.): "Preferred prey of Texas individuals seems to be top minnows (*Gambusia*); other freshwater fish, frogs, tadpoles, dragonfly nymphs, and some bits of plants were also taken." Apparently, most of Oberholser's statement was abstracted from Palmer (op. cit.): "Stomachs of 2 birds collected in Aug. at Norias, Kenedy Co., Texas. (Examined in U.S. Biol. Survey), contained: (1) 30 top minnows (*Gambusia*), 78%; bones of young frog (*Rana* ?), 4%; dragonfly nymphs (Aeschidae), 18%, (2) at least 70 *Gambusia,* 86%; 2 tadpoles (*Rana*), 12%; Aeschnidae nymphs, 2%." Based on chick regurgitations at Sidney Island, a coastal National Audubon Sanctuary located at the northern tip of Sabine Lake near the Texas-Louisiana Border, Morrison et al. (op. cit.), reported: "The most frequently captured prey species of the cormorant normally are found in aggregations of similar size classes, and differ in both feeding habits (*Poecilia*

[Livebearers] and *Cyprinodon* [Killifishes] are top feeders, *Mugil* [Mullets] and *Micropogon* [Croakers] are bottom feeders) and size (18–197 mm)." The regurgitations analyzed by Morrison et al. contained a total of 16 species; in contrast, our samples contained 10 species. However, their sample and our 1981 sample contained Mosquito Fish and Gizzard Shad; in our combined 1981–1982 samples, occurrences by number were 1.2% and 14.3%, respectively; in that of Morrison et al., they were 2.6% and 0.3% respectively.

In inland reservoirs, Gizzard Shad, Carp, and Sunfishes are very abundant, readily available fishes; thus, our study supports the conclusion of Morrison et al.: ". . . the Olivaceous Cormorant can be described as a food generalist during the breeding season, exploiting the most readily attainable prey." Furthermore, both studies show that Olivaceous Cormorants capture very few game fishes. In 1983, we propose to collect a large sample of regurgitated fishes of nestling Olivaceous Cormorants in order to determine their diet throughout the entire breeding season.

We wish to acknowledge identification and ageing of fishes by Mr. Charles R. Inman, Inland Fisheries Biologist, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Dr. Richard L. Noble, Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences, Texas A&M University.

High Numbers of Caracara Found at Temporary Roost

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In Texas, the Crested Caracara (*Polyborus plancucs*) is a scavenger of the south Texas brush country, coastal grasslands, and open country savannahs. Usually seen singly or in groups of two to three (Oberholser 1974, The bird life of Texas, Univ. of Texas Press, Austin), the Crested Caracara has been increasingly uncommon in recent years, a victim of the ever changing habitat within its range. The range of the caracara in the United States includes parts of Florida and Arizona, but it is within Texas that the species has its main stronghold in North America.

In the yearly Audubon Christmas Bird Counts, the Texas counts have always taken top honors for the highest numbers of caracara, but decreases in these numbers have been noted by many observers. The following quote by Edgar Kincaid Jr., the editor of *The Bird Life of Texas* (Oberholser, 1974) serves to illustrate these decreases.

> "In 1948 the nation's high count for Caracara was 25 at Harlingen; top figure in 1949 was 14 at Laguna Atascosa. During the 1950's the average largest count was 28.6 individuals; the average in the 1960's was 7.8 birds per year. The biggest drop in Texas Caracara numbers followed the 1957 Christmas season, from a total of 53 in that year to 16 in 1958, and 7 in 1959. In 1970, the feeble

number of 4 at Port Mansfield captured top honors for Texas and the nation; 4 individuals at Laguna Atascosa in 1971 again won the national high count."

Since the Palmetto State Park Christmas Count was re-activated in 1977, and the number of observers has increased to allow a more complete coverage of the count circle, this count has consistently led the nation in reported caracara numbers each year. The count totals of 28 caracara in 1977, 35 in 1978, and 53 in 1979 were very encouraging when compared to the very low numbers that had been reported in other areas of the state in recent years. My own observation over the 1977–1980 period in the Palmetto State Park area indicated that caracara could often be found in substantial numbers in the proper habitat in areas of Caldwell, Gonzales, and Guadalupe counties. This area is roughly a 55 km diameter circle, with Palmetto State Park the approximate center. It was not unusual to observe 4 to 8 caracara feeding on a roadside kill along some of the savannah and river bottomland within this area. These observations seemed to show that the bird was holding its own, if not increasing in numbers in this area.

Even more encouraging were the observations of caracara during the 1980 and 1982 Palmetto Christmas Bird Counts. The 1980 count, held on 27 December 1980, was especially noteworthy for the unusually high numbers of roosting caracara observed near dusk. At 1700 on the count day, observers Dr. David Huffman, Z. G. Huffman, and Ronnie Bell were driving along a dirt road in Gonzales County, approximately 7 km SE of Palmetto State Park, when they began to see large numbers of caracara. They reported birds entering what appeared to be a roost area, and behaving similar to vultures going to roost. They counted at least 85 individual caracara, some in groups of 8 to 10 birds standing on the ground, on hay stacks, or perched in trees. All of the birds were reported to be within a few hundred meters of each other. The observers were aware that they were viewing a very unusual event and were careful to be accurate with their count.

The following morning, 28 December 1980, Chuck Sexton, Becky Lasley and I went to the reported roost area, hoping to find some of the caracara still there. The early morning had been quite foggy, and we arrived in the area at 1015, just as the fog began to lift. We saw vultures rising on thermals as we drove along the dirt road. While watching the vultures circling above us, we began to see large numbers of caracara leaving the area. The caracaras were in groups of 2 to 15 individuals, with a few single birds on isolated tree tops. We counted 200 Turkey Vultures (*Cathartes aura*), 1 Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*), and 55 caracaras leaving the area. About half of the caracaras were perched in trees initially, the other half on the ground or on large round hay bales. As we continued along the 0.6 km stretch of dirt road where all the birds were located, most of them flushed from their perches and flew to distant tree tops. We saw as many as 10 birds land in a single tree. We felt that the presence of the fog in the early morning hours was responsible for keeping so many of the birds at their roost sight until the relatively late hour of 1015.

The general habitat was semi-rolling pastureland, with rather large pecan and oak trees along an intermittent creek. There are several cattle stock ponds in the area and a large chicken farm is nearby. An extensive stand of mesquite and brush grows on an upland area a few hundred meters west of the roost sight. Non-breeding roosts of caracara up to 10 individuals have been reported (Oberholser, 1974), but no large group such as the one described here had previously been

observed to my knowledge. Other persons returned to the roost area on several occasions in the weeks following its discovery, but no one encountered more than 6 to 8 individuals.

The reported caracara total for the 1980 Palmetto Christmas Count was a remarkable 104 individuals, an all time high count for the nation. To arrive at the reported 104 birds, all of the morning and early afternoon sightings were discarded. I tallied the birds reported at the roost (85) plus additional individuals (19) that were observed at 1700 perched in trees in groups of 2 to 4 in other areas of the count circle. I felt that the 19 birds in other areas were settled for the night and were not going to join the main roost.

The 1981 Palmetto count was held on 26 December 1981. We were eager to find another caracara roost, and several observers spent most of the early morning and late afternoon hours searching for groups of caracara. No roost was found, and no one saw more than 5 caracaras at any one time. The count total for 1981 was 36 birds, not as impressive as the 104 the year before, but still large enough to take the national high.

The 1982 count was conducted 26 December 1982. Again, observers took to the field mindful of potential caracara roosts. At 0700, observers Will Matern, Pat Hartigan, Tina Moody, Steve and Andrea Peake and Rhea Copening were preparing to bird an area at the southern extreme of the count circle near Lake Gonzales. They were approximately 11 km due south of Palmetto State Park when they observed 50 caracaras fly out of riparian habitat along the Guadalupe River. The birds were in several groups of 3 to 10 individuals and dispersed to the south. The habitat is similar to that described for the 1980 roost sight, and numerous Turkey Vultures were seen with the caracaras in 1982 as they had been in 1980. Several observers attempted to locate the 1982 roost sight in later weeks, but were unsuccessful.

Whether these ephemeral caracara roosts change from day to day, year to year, or season to season in this area is something worthy of further study.

NOTES AND NEWS

ABOUT THE ARTIST.—The illustration of the Whooping Crane (inside front cover) is an original pencil drawing by Carol Smith Dickinson. Carol graduated from Texas A&M University with a BS degree in Wildlife Ecology. She is currently employed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service stationed at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge near Austwell, Texas. Carol enjoys art as a hobby and prefers wildlife illustration. Carol resides on the refuge at P.O. Box 100, Austwell, Texas 77950.

RECENT TEXAS COUNTY RECORDS.—Submission of new, substantiated Texas county bird records should be sent to the *Bulletin* editor. General guidelines for submission are given in the *Bulletin,* Vol. 12(2):55–57. The "Recent Texas County Records" section will not preclude articles on additions from systematic collections which heretofore have not been treated separately. Further, this section will not take the place of articles or notes on species significant range extensions, unusual seasonal occurrences, breeding documentation, or other reports of biological significance.

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